

## WAGERING GAME WITH SIMULATED MECHANICAL REELS

### CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] This application is a continuation-in-part of International Application No. PCT/US2007/15185, filed on Jun. 29, 2007, which claims priority from U.S. Patent Application No. 60/818,127, filed Jun. 30, 2006, and U.S. Patent Application No. 60/876,917, filed Dec. 22, 2006. The '185, '127 and '917 applications are each herein incorporated by reference in their entirety.

[0002] This application is related to U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2003/0157980, filed Feb. 15, 2002, U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2007/00010318, filed Jul. 11, 2006, and International Publication No. WO 2007/030781A2, filed Sep. 11, 2006. The '980, '318 and '781 publications are each herein incorporated by reference in their entirety.

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### FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0004] The present invention relates generally to gaming machines and methods for playing wagering games, and more particularly, to a gaming machine having video displays that provide images that more accurately simulate mechanical-type spinning reels and gaming machines with improved mechanical reels.

### BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0005] Gaming machines, such as slot machines, video poker machines and the like, have been a cornerstone of the gaming industry for several years. Generally, the popularity of such machines with players is dependent on the likelihood (or perceived likelihood) of winning money at the machine and the intrinsic entertainment value of the machine relative to other available gaming options. Where the available gaming options include a number of competing machines and the expectation of winning at each machine is roughly the same (or believed to be the same), players are likely to be attracted to the most entertaining and exciting machines. Shrewd operators consequently strive to employ the most entertaining and exciting machines, features, and enhancements available because such machines attract frequent play and hence increase profitability to the operator. Therefore, there is a continuing need for gaming machine manufacturers to continuously develop new games and improved gaming enhancements that will attract frequent play through enhanced entertainment value to the player.

[0006] One concept that has been successfully employed to enhance the entertainment value of a game is the concept of a "secondary" or "bonus" game that may be played in conjunction with a "basic" game. The bonus game may comprise any type of game, either similar to or completely

different from the basic game, which is entered upon the occurrence of a selected event or outcome in the basic game. Generally, bonus games provide a greater expectation of winning than the basic game and may also be accompanied with more attractive or unusual video displays and/or audio. Bonus games may additionally award players with "progressive jackpot" awards that are funded, at least in part, by a percentage of coin-in from the gaming machine or a plurality of participating gaming machines. Because the bonus game concept offers tremendous advantages in player appeal and excitement relative to other known games, and because such games are attractive to both players and operators, there is a continuing need to develop gaming machines with new types of bonus games to satisfy the demands of players and operators.

[0007] Video-based slot machines allow for flexibility in game design and do not require any additional hardware for implementing different games, such as bonus games. With respect to flexibility in game design, the video display of a video-based slot machine can depict complex and entertaining graphical images, animations, and play sequences that cannot be employed in mechanical slot machines. Video-based slot machines do not require any additional hardware for implementing bonus games because the bonus game may be depicted on the primary video display and executed by the same game controller used to execute the video slot game.

[0008] Video-based slot machines and mechanical slot machines generally appeal to different segments of the market. Although many players are attracted to the complex and entertaining graphical images, animations, and play sequences afforded by video-based slot machines, many players are still drawn to mechanical slot machines because they are simplistic machines that often only pay on a single pay line and only require a pull of a handle to initiate a spin of the reels. Part of the reason that these players avoid video-based slot machines is that the simulated reels on the video-based machines are different in looks than standard mechanical reels. This is primarily due to the nature of the video screen displaying the images.

[0009] It would be beneficial to incorporate some of the features of the video-based slot machines into a traditional mechanical slot machine because of the flexibility that these video-based machines offer. A need exists for a slot machine having video-based capabilities, while still preserving the simplistic rotation of mechanical reels that traditionalists appreciate in the traditional mechanical slot machine.

### SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0010] The present invention is a gaming machine that includes a housing having a display region, a transparent layer, and a video display. The transparent layer is located in the display region and has a radius of curvature. The video display is located behind the transparent layer for projecting moving images onto the transparent layer. The images include a plurality of symbols that indicate a randomly selected outcome of the wagering game. The curved transparent layer can also be moving as well.

[0011] The present invention also contemplates a method of operating a gaming machine comprising receiving a wager to play a wagering game and moving a plurality of symbols across a curved transparent layer by projecting